STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD OF NORBERT OWENS, DEPUTY ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR, AIR TRAFFIC, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE A FIELD BRIEFING CONDUCTED BY THE HONORABLE DICK ZIMMER. MARCH 30, 1992.

Congressman Zimmer and Members of the Subcommittee:

I welcome the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the issue of aircraft noise, and provide you with some background on the FAA's efforts to reduce the impact of noise on communities associated with major metropolitan airports. Joining me today is Louise E. Maillett, Director, Office of Environment and Energy.

Aircraft noise is, unfortunately, the by-product of the success of air travel and the rapid growth the United States has experienced in its air transportation industry. For example, in 1976, we enplaned 218.0 million passengers. In 1990, less than 15 years later, enplanements had increased by nearly 140% to 497.9 million. We expect this growth to continue, and by the year 2000 we anticipate over 700 million enplanements.

As you know, the regional area served by Newark, LaGuardia and John F. Kennedy (JFK) has also undergone a significant growth in air transportation. Today, these airports are a cornerstone of this Nation's air transportation network and account for 7% of total passenger enplanements. Newark International Airport, for example, which handled only 3.4 million passenger enplanements in

1976, increased to over 11 million enplanements by 1990. We forecast that this growth will continue, and by the year 2000, enplanements will increase to over 19 million. This growth clearly demonstrates the important public service that these airports provide to this region.

One consequence of this growth for the New Jersey/New York area is that the air traffic control system, adequate for 1976 traffic levels, was far outstripped by public demand for air traffic services. To respond to this demand, beginning in 1987, we implemented phased air traffic modifications to safely and efficiently accommodate the increasing levels of air traffic and the complex interrelationship of air traffic patterns between Newark, LaGuardia and JFK. The plan that implemented the new air traffic control network was known as the Expanded East Coast Plan (EECP). Since 1987, we have continued to monitor air traffic and make adjustments to traffic flows that would ensure the safety and efficiency of air travel into these major airports.

I would like to emphasize that without action by the FAA to efficiently accommodate the increasing volumes of aircraft traffic, congestion at these airports could have resulted in significant and costly air traffic delays with the obvious impacts to the airports and the regional communities. For example, in 1986, prior to implementation of the EECP, Newark averaged nearly

140 delays per 1000 instrument operations. After implementation of the first phase of the EECP, delays had dropped to a rate of less than 65 per 1000 instrument operations for 1987, a 53 percent reduction.

Notwithstanding these increases in aircraft operations, and their potential for increased noise levels, we have been able to make substantial progress in reducing aircraft noise. In the mid-1970s, 6-7 million people nation-wide resided in communities most affected by noise. Today, that number has been reduced to approximately 2.7 million. This dramatic reduction has been made possible primarily by the introduction of quieter aircraft. In 1975, 75 percent of our Nation's fleet consisted of stage 1 aircraft, which were 4 times as loud as the new stage 3 aircraft. Today, stage 3 aircraft constitute nearly 45 percent of air carrier fleets, and all stage 1 aircraft have been been phased out. Much progress has been made, and the FAA is committed to implementing additional improvements that will continue this trend.

One important contribution to our efforts to reduce aircraft noise is the Airport Noise and Capacity Act of 1990 (ANCA). This legislation represents a carefully crafted balance between the need for a healthy and viable air transportation system and the needs of individuals adversely affected by aircraft noise. This Act established a national aviation noise policy that provides for an orderly transition to quieter stage 3 aircraft by the year

2000, and directed the FAA to promulgate regulations to implement this transition--ten years sooner than the transition to stage 3 would have otherwise been. Nationally, this accelerated schedule will reduce the number of individuals most affected by noise from 2.7 million to 400,000 by the year 2000. This is substantially faster than would have occurred under a normal market transition to stage 3 aircraft.

In September 1991, the FAA issued two final rules to implement the provisions that Congress put in ANCA. The first rule requires airplane operators to transition to stage 3 aircraft by the year 2000, and provides two options for meeting interim compliance requirements. The first option allows operators to phase out 25 percent of their stage 2 aircraft by 1994, 50 percent by 1996, and 75 percent by 1998. The second option allows operators to phase in new aircraft to achieve a stage 3 fleet mix of 55 percent by 1994, 65 percent by 1996, and 75 percent by 1998. Importantly, both options assure that there will be steady progress in noise reduction.

For communities associated with the Newark, JFK and LaGuardia airports, this rule will provide important noise reduction benefits. Our projections indicate that the transition to stage 3 aircraft alone will reduce the number of people significantly affected by noise from the current level of 681,000 to 44,000 by the year 2000--a 94 percent reduction. Corresponding noise reduction benefits will also accrue to citizens residing in less significantly affected communities further from these airports.

Our second rule sets out uniform procedures directed by the Congress in ANCA for local airports seeking to impose restrictions on stage 2 or 3 aircraft operations. The implementing regulations provide an opportunity for public comment by requiring airports proposing stage 2 restrictions to give public notice 180 days before such restrictions are to go into effect. Such proposals must include an analysis of anticipated or actual costs and benefits, a description of alternative restrictions, and a comparison of the costs and benefits of the alternatives to the proposed restriction. Local restrictions on stage 3 aircraft, by law, require FAA approval unless an airport reaches agreement with all aircraft operators.

The FAA is also addressing issues of aircraft noise reduction in the congressionally directed EIS on the effects of changes in aircraft flight patterns over the State of New Jersey that were implemented by the EECP. Since commencing work on this document in December 1990, we have conducted five public meetings in New Jersey and received more than 300 written public comments. This EIS is very unique and complex, being the first air traffic EIS to cover an entire State and to consider aircraft noise beyond an airport environment.

The field work for this document is under review, and the draft EIS is currently being prepared. As Members of this Subcommittee are aware, the objectives and procedures of the National

Environmental Policy Act of 1969 limit the actions an agency can undertake pending completion of an EIS. Therefore, the FAA intends to avoid taking any actions that would prejudge proper consideration of all alternatives. Since the substance of the draft EIS is currently being developed by the FAA, we have been very careful not to discuss the substance of the EIS until the draft is issued. We are also concerned that publicizing preliminary data could mislead the public, jeopardize the orderly development of the EIS by our contractor, and invite future litigation. All of these have the potential to delay completion of the EIS, and more importantly, delay any actions associated with the EIS. I would like to assure the Subcommittee that we are making every effort to ensure the integrity of the environmental assessment and its final recommendations.

I would like to share with you today the scope of this important environmental effort, as well as our current schedule for completion. Through our EIS process we are analyzing air traffic impacts on all aspects of the environment. In addition to noise, these include water and air quality, wildlife refuges, and historic sites. We are also looking at alternatives, including a return to the pre-EECP structure, increased use of ocean routes, different dispersals of Newark air traffic, as well as continuing existing routes. This EIS has been a substantial and complex undertaking, requiring development of a new analytical technique to measure and analyze enroute noise, and procedures to analyze and evaluate aircraft impacts on a State-wide scope.

The completed draft EIS is scheduled to be released later this summer. In addition to the already extensive public input, we will hold five additional public hearings in New Jersey during the 45 day public comment period. Comments will be carefully reviewed and a final EIS will be released after this thorough review. Completing of the final EIS will depend on the number and complexity of the comments we receive on the draft EIS. Subject to this review, however, we estimate that a final EIS will be completed at the end of this year.

In addition to our efforts in New Jersey, we are also conducting an Aircraft Noise Mitigation Review (ANMR) covering the greater New York metropolitan area, which includes portions of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. This review provides for close State and local involvement by authorizing the Governors of these States to appoint three representatives each to serve on a nine-member advisory team to the FAA Administrator.

Similar to our EIS, we have held 18 public meetings and received over 400 written public comments on the ANMR. Comments have been analyzed by a team of technical experts led by the FAA's air traffic office with the assistance of the Office of Safety Quality Assurance.

In addition to our EIS and ANMR activities, I would like to share with this Subcommittee some additional avenues the FAA is pursuing to address the impacts and levels of noise.

To guide our local offices, we have issued a Noise Screening Notice to help them determine the need for further environmental consideration. This screening should be applied during the preliminary planning phase of the proposed route modification.

The FAA has also added new positions in our organization to improve our focus on environmental aspects of our air traffic program. Recently, we established a new Washington headquarters Program Office for Environmental Issues in the Air Traffic Service. This office will provide environmental oversight for future air traffic procedures and operational modifications. To ensure that the policies and procedures that are established in our headquarters are put in place in the field, we have established environmental specialist positions in our regional offices. Our Eastern Region currently has an environmental specialist on its staff who is actively participating in the ANMR analysis.

This fiscal year, the FAA has committed $3.5 million on research, engineering and development projects targeted at assessing and minimizing aircraft noise. These projects include subsonic turbojet noise reduction research, noise prediction software, creation of airport noise abatement cost/benefit analysis methodologies, and analysis of aircraft noise certification procedures. These research and development projects will help ensure that the noise abatement progress we have made will continue into the 21st century.

In addition to these research efforts, we also provide funding for noise abatement efforts through our Airport Improvement Program (AIP). Since the inception of this program, nearly $1.2 billion has been provided to airports for developing noise compatibility plans, and to carry out the recommendations contained in these plans.

This year, as part of the FAA's three year reauthorization request, we have asked the Congress for authority to increase the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) Noise Set-Aside level from 10 percent to 12.5 percent. This 2.5 percent increase would make an additional $47.5 million annually available to airports and adjoining communities over the next 3 years to support important and needed noise-related projects. Further, it would permit these projects to be implemented at a faster pace.

In closing, I would like to reemphasize our continuing commitment to reduce the levels and impacts of aircraft noise, while continuing to maintain the safety and health of our Nation's air transportation system. To make our efforts a success, we will continue to work closely with the Congress, local communities, airports, and the aviation industry to meet this challenge.

This completes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to questions you may have.